

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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SENATOR THERESE MURRAY

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BILLS IN THIRD READING

December 30, 2002

The Honorable Nancy Flavin, Co-Chair Special Advisory Committee
Room 243
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Representative Flavin:

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the report, "The Feasibility of Consolidate Health Care Financing and Streamlined Health Care Delivery in Massachusetts, which was prepared by LECG, LLC; Mercer Government Human Services Consulting; and McDonell Consulting.

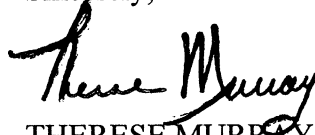
First, I would like to commend the consultants, the Advisory Committee Members, and all other interested parties who participated in this project. I think that they have done a good job of delineating three approaches that could be undertaken to reach the goal of universal health coverage for all Massachusetts residents as well as to discuss the fiscal, political and legal implications of each option.

It is truly a sad commentary that the United States is one of only a few industrialized nations in the world not to provide universal or near- universal health care coverage to its residents. In Massachusetts, it is estimated that more than 399,000 individuals have no health insurance. Of these, 72,000 are children.

However, given the current fiscal crisis confronting the Commonwealth, I do not believe that it will be possible to undertake any of the plans at this time. We cannot realistically expect to further expand the Medicaid Program when we have already had to eliminate coverage for services such as eyeglasses, dental care, prosthetics and orthotics and we are struggling to find a way to preserve services to 50,000 MassHealth Basic recipients, who are scheduled to lose their coverage on April 1, 2003.

I also do not think that a system involving a Mandated Basic Benefit Package would work given the current economic climate and the fact that participation is mandatory. I agree that the lack of an enforcement mechanism is a major issue. I believe that a single payer system can only be achieved successfully if it is done on a national level. Independent actions taken by states will not work. However, in light of the inability of the Clinton Administration to reform health care nationally, I do not expect action on a federal level in the foreseeable future. Therefore, I believe that the most effective approach in Massachusetts *at this time* will be to concentrate our efforts on preserving current services, and – as the economy improves – using the information provided in this report to discuss future actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Therese Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Therese" and the last name "Murray" clearly distinguishable.

THERESE MURRAY

State Senator

Plymouth and Barnstable District